CLOSER TO REALITY SERIES

HONOURING THE DEPARTED

A Buddhist Perspective

REVISED EDITION

AGGACITTA BHIKKHU

Closer to Reality Series 1

Honouring the Departed

A Buddhist Perspective

SASANARAKKHA BUDDHIST SANCTUARY brings us a series of booklets that investigate popular interpretations and practices of Buddhism in the light of the Pali scriptures and real-life experiences. Using a critical yet constructive approach based on the **Four Great Standards** of Mahaparinibbana Sutta (DN 16), as well as on **Kalama Sutta** (AN 3:66), the booklets are an attempt to reconcile ancient teachings with selected contemporary life experiences and research findings. In this way, SASANARAKKHA BUDDHIST SANCTUARY hopes to bring us closer to a practical reality we can more easily connect with.

Four Great Standards. Before he passed away, the Buddha gave us practical advice to assess situations in which we hear a monk proclaiming that what he teaches "is the Dhamma... the Vinaya... the teachings of the Master". He may say that he heard and learned it in the presence of

- the Buddha himself,
- a Sangha in a certain monastery with its *theras* (elders) and leaders,
- many learned theras in a certain monastery who are holders of the traditional teachings, bearers of the Dhamma, Vinaya, and the summaries, or
- a learned thera in a certain monastery who is a holder of the traditional teachings, bearer of the Dhamma, Vinaya, and the summaries.

In such situations, without rejoicing in or scorning the monk's words, we should investigate to see if such teachings are included in the suttas or seen in the Vinaya. If they are, we may conclude that they *are* the words of the Buddha and that they have been well learned by the speaker. Otherwise, we may conclude that they are not the words of the Buddha and that they have been wrongly learned by the speaker, and so we should reject them.

Kalama Sutta. Also commonly known as "The Charter of Free Inquiry", this discourse was given by the Buddha to the Kalamas who were perplexed by the conflicting claims of visiting monks and priests. The following is a translation of some relevant parts of the sutta by Ven Bhikkhu Bodhi.

> "Come, Kalamas. Do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of scriptures, by logical reasoning, by inferential reasoning, by reflection on reasons, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence of a speaker, or because you think, 'The monk is our teacher.' But when you know for yourselves, 'These things are unwholesome, these things are blamable, these things are censured by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practised, lead to harm and suffering', then you should abandon them... But when you know for yourselves, 'These things are wholesome, these things are blameless, these things are praised by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practised, lead to welfare and happiness', then you should engage in them..."

Honouring the Departed

A Buddhist Perspective

Aggacitta Bhikkhu

Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary

Published for free distribution by
SASANARAKKHA BUDDHIST SANCTUARY
c/o 28 & 30, 1st Floor
Jalan Medan Taiping 4
Medan Taiping
34000 Taiping, Perak
T. 05 8084429
F. 05 8084423
E. office@sasanarakkha.org
W. http//www.sasanarakkha.org

Produced by
Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary Publication Team (English)

Editor-in-chief:
Looi Sow Fei

Sub-editors:
Ven Kumara Bhikkhu, Ang Siew Mun, Chan Kum Leen, Lim Kim See, Lim Teik Leong

Proofreaders:
Khor Siew Hun, Lim Lay Hoon, Ooi Cheng Cheng, Seow Siew Hoon, Yap Keow Kean

Photo credits:
Ban Chuan Family, Chan Khoon San, Goh Keat Soon, Law Hwee Ming, Liew Family, Lim Chin Oo, Lim Hock Chuan, Prestavest Memorial Park, Tan Ban Leong, Teoh Family, Than Hsiang Temple, TIMS, Tong Family

Layout and cover design:
Jotika, Sukhi Hotu

Special thanks to Hor Kwei Loon for his constructive feedback on content development

Copyright © *Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary* July 2004
Permission to reprint for free distribution and non-commercial usage may be obtained in writing from the publisher.

First printing, March 2004: 5000 copies
This revised edition August 2004: 5000 copies
Reprint, October 2006: 6000 copies
Printed by *Setiakawan,* Selangor

ISBN 983-41646-0-2
Cover photo: Making offerings at home ancestral shrine

Table of Contents

Guide to Non-English Terms and Scriptual References 6

Introduction 7

Part 1: INVESTIGATION

Perceptions of Honouring the Departed 8

- Making Offerings 8
  - Also an Ancient Indian Custom 8
  - Offerings Include Food and Drinks 9
  - Contemporary Experiences 16
  - Offerings to Devas 17
  - Dedication of Offerings to Devas 19
  - Why Make Offerings? 21
  - Where and When to Make Offerings 23
- Sharing of Merits 27
  - Conditions for Efficacy 28
  - Other Ways Not Mentioned in the Scriptures 29
- Summary 35
- Conclusion 36

Part 2: SUGGESTIONS

Procedures to Honour the Departed 37

- Showing Respect 37
- Making Material Offerings 39
- Inviting the Departed 39
- Sharing Merits 41
- Aspiration 43

APPENDIX

Sutta References on Dedication of Merits 45

- Dedicating Merits to Living Human 45
- Dedicating Merits to a Deva 47
- Summary 48

Glossary of Non-English Terms 49

With the exception of proper nouns, uncommon non-English words are italicised, with full diacritical marks on their first occurrence in the main text, followed by their English translations in round brackets. In subsequent occurrences they are in normal font. More common terms will also be with full diacritical marks and italicised on their first occurrence but will not be accompanied by translations.

For easy reference, a Glossary of such non-English terms, including some proper nouns, is provided on pg 45-47.

Certain parts of the main text are accompanied by the original Pali equivalents, which are italicised and placed within round brackets. These are not further explained in the Glossary.

The table below is meant for the use of readers who are knowledgeable in Pali literature and who may wish to apply the Four Great Standards. The references have been made according to Vipassana Research Institute's Chattha Sangayana CD-ROM (v 3.0).

Abbreviation	Text	Reference according to
AN	Anguttara Nikaya	Book number:Sutta number
DN	Digha Nikaya	Sutta number
Khp	Khuddakapatha	Sutta number
KN	Khuddaka Nikaya	Name of Book/Text
Pac	Pacittiya	Rule number
Sn	Suttanipata	Chapter number:Sutta number

Introduction

There are different ways of remembering and honouring the departed. One of them is the ancient Chinese custom of making food offerings at the graves of departed relatives at certain times of the year, especially during the Qing Ming[1] season. From the Theravada Buddhist point of view, does this practice contradict its scriptures? What is the proper way of honouring the departed?

This booklet attempts to answer these questions in two parts. Part 1 investigates scriptural and prevalent perceptions of honouring the departed, while Part 2 suggests procedures to honour the departed based on the conclusions reached in Part 1.

[1] A Chinese festival now most commonly associated with honouring ancestors and the departed, usually falling on 5 April of the Gregorian calendar. Literally it means "pure brightness" or "clear-bright".

Perceptions of Honouring the Departed

MAKING OFFERINGS

Some people say that Buddhists should not offer food to their departed relatives as it is not a Buddhist practice and there is no efficacy in it. Instead they should invite the Sangha, make offerings to the Sangha and then transfer merits to the departed relatives. Is this true? Let us investigate by scrutinising some relevant sections of the Pali scriptures.

Also an Ancient Indian Custom

In the Vinaya Pitaka (Pac 40), there is a story of a *bhikkhu* (Buddhist monk) who lived in a charnel ground, a place somewhat like a cemetery except that the corpses there were not buried. The corpses of the rich were cremated but those of the poor were simply thrown there and left to be eaten by animals or to decompose. This bhikkhu was very austere. He would not accept any requisites offered by devotees. He looked for cloth wrapped around corpses to make his own robes and his bed was made of discarded planks. Neither did he accept food offered by the laity. How then did he survive?

At that time, people offered food, perhaps similar to the way the Chinese offer rice, cakes, roast chicken and pork, to the deceased relatives at the charnel ground. After they had left, the bhikkhu would help himself to the food. Some people complained that he took the food they had offered to their departed relatives. Since he looked well-fed, rumours circulated that he consumed human flesh! When Buddha heard the

complaint, he set the rule that food must be offered to monks before they could eat it. That is why monks have to wait for food to be offered to them before they can consume it, not because they are high and mighty and need to be served.

So during the Buddha's time, it was already an Indian custom to make offerings to departed relatives.

Offerings Include Food and Drinks

Sometimes people invite us to receive alms at a recently deceased person's house. We usually recite Tirokutta Sutta (KN: Khp 7), which describes the circumstances of departed ones with special reference to their living relatives. Here is an accurate and direct translation from the Pali Canon, without the glosses of the commentary.

> Outside the walls they stand,
> at the crossroads and doorposts,
> to their own home returning.
>
> When an ample meal
> of food and drinks is spread,
> no one remembers them
> because of beings' [bad] *kamma*.
>
> Those who have sympathy
> give thus to their relatives
> —pure, rich and suitable food and drinks
> occasionally—
> thinking, "Let this be for [our] relatives;
> may [our] relatives be happy."
>
> Then those departed relatives (*ñātipetā*)[2]
> who come and gather there

[2] The term 'peta' as used here (in *ñātipetā*), as well as in the other suttas mentioned later, is used to mean "departed one", not "hungry ghost" as is popularly thought. The term is used extensively in the four Nikayas (DN, MN, SN and AN) and in some texts belonging to the fifth Nikaya (KN) to mean "departed one". In the other texts of the fifth Nikaya believed to be later compilations, and in post canonical works like the commentaries and sub-commentaries, the latter meaning of "hungry ghost" seems to be more prevalent.

To the departed should one give offerings,
remembering what has been done in the past.

Further, this offering that has been given to the Sangha
reaches the departed immediately.

earnestly rejoice
at the ample food and drinks,
saying, "Long live our relatives,
on account of whom we get [this].
To us [this] offering (*pūjā*) has been made [We have been honoured]
and to the donors it is not without benefit
[and the donors are not without benefit]."

For there is no farming there;
cattle keeping is non-existent.
There is no trading
such as buying and selling with gold.
On what is given here
the deceased (*kālaṅkatā*), the departed ones (*petā*), subsist there.

Even as water rained on high ground
flows to the lowland accordingly,
so what is given here
reaches departed ones (*petānaṃ upakappati*).

Just as rivers that are full
fill the sea,
so what is given here
reaches departed ones.

"He gave me [gifts],
he did [things] for me.
They were my relatives, friends and companions."
To departed ones should one give offerings (*petānaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ dajjā*),
remembering what has been done in the past.

For weeping, sorrow,
or any other manner of lamentation
is not for the benefit of departed ones.
Thus the relatives stand [in such a position] (*evaṃ tiṭṭhanti ñātayo*).

Further, this offering that has been given to
and firmly established in the Sangha
for [the departed] one's long-term benefit (*dīgharattaṃ hitāyassa*).
is immediately appropriate / reaches [the departed one]
immediately (*ṭhānaso upakappati*).

The duty of relatives has been shown;
lofty offerings to honour (*pūjā*) the departed ones have been made;
strength has been given to the bhikkhus;
and much merit has been accumulated by you.

The above verses show very clearly that the offerings made to departed ones comprise food and drinks. Only the last two stanzas seem rather out of place because the Sangha is not mentioned right from the beginning of the *sutta*. Moreover, the second person pronoun at the very end, i.e. 'you', seems like a rather abrupt insertion. Could they have been added later? I suppose we can never tell with any certainty.

If those two verses were an intrinsic part of the whole sutta, I would like to propose the following interpretation. Two types of *dāna* are referred to here: the direct offering of food and drinks to the departed ones, and that to the Sangha, followed by sharing of merits.

However, the commentaries [e.g. to this sutta, to the Dhammapada (KN), and to Petavatthu (KN)] prefer to interpret the act of giving mentioned in this sutta as a Sanghadana only, by justifying with a detailed legendary background story stretching back to the time of Phussa Buddha, 92 *kappas* (aeons) ago. The story tells of how King Bimbisara's former relatives became miserable ghosts for aeons but immediately benefited and were relieved of suffering in our Lord Gotama Buddha's presence when they rejoiced in the dedication of merits derived from a Sanghadana. This legend is a typical basis for the popular Theravadin view that this is the *only* proper way to benefit departed relatives. But is this popular belief fully supported by the Canon and by real-life experience? There is substantial canonical evidence to suggest otherwise.

For example, in Sigalovada Sutta (DN 31), it is mentioned that children have five responsibilities towards their parents. The fifth one is to continually make offerings to the departed (*petānaṃ kālaṅkatānaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ anuppadassāmi*).

Making offerings here could mean offering food to departed relatives. It is not mentioned in the sutta that they must invite the Sangha for dana and then transfer merits to the departed relatives, although this is suggested by the commentary. Hence, we cannot say unequivocally that offering food to departed relatives is not a Buddhist practice.

More explicitly, in Janussoni Sutta (AN 10:177), there is an interesting dialogue between a *brahmin* named Janussoni and the Buddha on the subject of giving dana to departed relatives. Below is a translation [with an abridgement of *duccarita* (bad conduct) and *sucarita* (good conduct)] of the parts relevant to our investigation.

> "Master Gotama, we brahmins give dana and do things in full faith, thinking, 'May this dana reach our departed relatives. May the departed relatives make use of this dana (*Idaṃ dānaṃ petā ñātisālohitā paribhuñjantu*).' Master Gotama, can this dana reach our departed relatives? Can the departed relatives make use of the dana?"
>
> The Buddha replied, "Brahmin, when there is an opportunity, it reaches; not when there is none (*Ṭhāne kho brāhmaṇa upakappati; no aṭṭhāne*)."
>
> The brahmin asked again, "Master Gotama, what is an opportunity and what is not an opportunity?"
>
> The Buddha answered:
>
> - "A person guilty of the ten types of bad conduct is born after death in hell. There, he lives on the food of hell-beings, [i.e. kamma][3]. This, brahmin, is not an opportunity. The dana does not reach him there.
> - A person guilty of the ten types of bad conduct is born after death in the animal kingdom. There, he lives on the food of animals. This, brahmin, is also not an opportunity. The dana does not reach him there.
> - A person in possession of the ten types of good conduct is born after death in the human world. There, he lives on the food of human beings. This, brahmin, is also not

[3] Their past kamma that generates their rebirth and sustains them in hell.

Tibetan Wheel of Life depicting possible rebirths in various realms of existence

an opportunity. The dana does not reach him there. [This is probably because either he is still in his mother's womb or he is already born but is not aware of the dana.]

- A person in possession of the ten types of good conduct is born after death in heaven. There, he lives on celestial food. This, brahmin, is also not an opportunity. The dana does not reach him there. [This is probably because devas cannot eat our gross human food.]
- A person guilty of the ten types of bad conduct is born after death in the realm of ghosts (*pettivisaya*)[4]. There, he lives on the food of ghosts as well as on what is continually given by his friends, colleagues, or blood relatives here. This, brahmin, is an opportunity. The dana does reach him there."

"Master Gotama, what if that departed relative was not reborn in that realm? Who uses the dana?" asked Janussoni.

"Other departed relatives who are born there use the dana," the Buddha answered.

"Master Gotama, what if neither that departed relative nor other departed relatives are born there? Who then uses the dana?"

"Impossible, brahmin," said the Buddha, "There is absolutely no chance that in this [infinitely] long period of time [i.e. beginningless *saṃsāra*] that realm could be void of departed relatives. However, brahmin, the donor too is not without benefit [since any act of dana will certainly yield beneficial results]."

From this sutta, we can make the following conclusions:

1. The dana given by the living to the deceased cannot reach him if he is born in hell, in the animal kingdom, in the human world or even in heaven.

[4] It should be noted that the realm of ghosts (*pettivisaya*) is distinct from hell. While ghosts may exist in another dimension within the human world, the beings of hell are confined to specific locations outside the human world. The popular Chinese belief that hell beings are temporarily let loose to wander in another dimension within the human world during the 7th month of the Chinese calendar is not supported by Theravada scriptures.

2. The dana can only reach the deceased if he is born in the realm of ghosts.
3. Dana here means offering food and drinks to the departed relatives—not inviting the Sangha for dana and then transferring merits to them. Otherwise, as we shall see later on pg 21, if transference of merit was meant here, then the dana could reach a departed relative born as a deva, who could also benefit by feeling honoured.

Contemporary Experiences

Real-life experiences also seem to support the statement that some ghosts can benefit from material offerings.

U Aye Maung, a Burmese writer who was interested in parapsychology, wrote a book called *The House of Life Again and Again* based on his research about twenty years ago in Burma. He went round the country to look for children who could remember their past lives. Some of these children could remember that during the interim period between their death and rebirth as human beings, they were ghosts. At first, they thought they too had bodies like human beings. So they ran away when they saw human beings, especially children who threw stones at them, even though stones would not be able to hurt them since they had subtle bodies. They were victims of their own misconception. Some of them could remember that they consumed filth like saliva, sputum, faeces and urine. They could also eat discarded food but they needed only one grain of rice to be full.

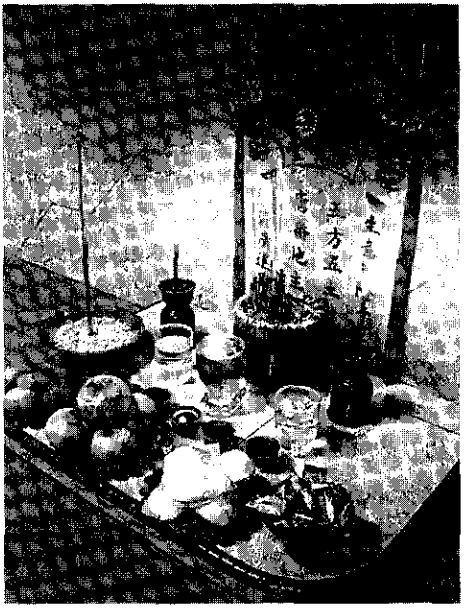
My own experience when I was young seems to be in keeping with this. I often fell sick due to supernatural causes. I could not be cured by Western medicine but I recovered when my mother went to the temple to consult the medium and then made offerings to the unseen beings at the roadside. This custom is practised in Burma too.

In a recent book called *Theodora Speaks*, the author, who has some inborn psychic abilities, recounted an incident which occured during the 7th month of the Chinese calendar. After her mother had prepared food and drinks to offer to her departed relatives and completed her prayers to the Door/Gate Deity, the author saw a group of ghosts entering the house and helping themselves to the offerings, buffet style. She noticed that the food was still physically intact although they seemed to be picking up whatever food they fancied. It may be interesting to note that the author is a long-time *vipassanā yogi* with an avid interest in Abhidhamma studies. So, this "eye-witness" experience mellowed her orthodox Theravadin outlook on the efficacy of making food offerings to the departed. In her own words, "From then on, I never took lightly whenever I saw people making offerings."

These and many other contemporary experiences seem to suggest that some ghosts can actually partake of food and drinks. Some people even say that they do so by "sucking" the *qi* (essence/energy) of the offerings and that's why food that has already been offered tastes rather flat!

Offerings to Devas

Additional canonical evidence shows that the Buddha encouraged his followers to make material offerings not only to departed relatives, but also to devas as well. For instance, in Pattakamma Sutta (AN 4:61) and Adiya Sutta (AN 5:41), the Buddha said to Anathapindika that a noble disciple (*ariyasāvako*) who acquires



Making offerings to deities is also praised by the Buddha as a worthy deed.

his income through righteous means should spend it by making five types of offerings (*pañcabaliṃ kattā hoti*):

- Offerings to living relatives (*ñātibali*)—e.g. giving material things
- Offerings to guests (*atithibali*)—e.g. giving snacks and hospitality
- Offerings to departed relatives (*pubbapetabali*)—e.g. making offerings of food at their graves
- Offerings to the king or government (*rājabali*)—e.g. paying taxes
- Offerings to devas (*devatābali*)—e.g. making offerings of light, fragrance, food and drinks at their shrines.

In Pattakamma Sutta, the Buddha praised the making of these offerings as a worthy deed, befitting wealth "that has gone to good use, that has been fruitfully employed and used for a worthy cause".

There is also a verse in Ratana Sutta (KN: Khp 6; Sn 2:1) that urges deities to protect humans because they make offerings (*bali*) to them day and night:

> Therefore, all you deities (*bhūtā*) please listen!
> Do have *mettā* for human beings
> who bring offerings day and night.
> So, being diligent, please guard them.

These references show that a Buddhist is actually encouraged by the Buddha to make offerings to devas. Does this not contradict the earlier comment that devas cannot receive our offerings? The following story from the Pali Canon throws some light on this apparent paradox.

Dedication of Offerings to Devas

When people invite us to their new house for dana, we often recite some verses extracted from the story on the making of

A smart person would invite virtuous monastics home for dana
and dedicate the offering to the devas there.

Pataligama town, found in Mahaparinibbana Sutta (DN 16). A translation follows:

> Where a person of wise disposition dwells
> he should feed restrained and virtuous monks,
> and dedicate the offering (*dakkhiṇamādise*) to the devas there.
>
> Honoured and cherished
> they honour and cherish him [in return].
> Then they sympathise with him
> like a mother with her own child.
> One who receives the sympathy of devas
> always sees auspicious things.

These verses were spoken by the Buddha after dana was offered to him and the Sangha in a new house. This shows that a smart person who invites virtuous and restrained Sangha members for dana and then dedicates the offering to the guardian devas in the dwelling can be protected and assisted by the devas. So, dedicating one's merits to devas is also a practice encouraged by the Buddha.

Why Make Offerings?

With the help of these canonical references, we can now provide a more comprehensive answer to the question: "What's the point of making offerings to departed relatives or to devas if they can't eat the food?" Several points need to be considered here.

1. It would be difficult to know where a departed relative has been reborn. There is still a chance that he or she could have been reborn in the realm of ghosts (*pettivisaya*). In such a case, the departed relative could "eat" the offerings.
2. As the Buddha said in Janussoni Sutta, even if the departed relative was not born in the realm of ghosts, other ghosts who were related to a person in previous lives could "eat" the offerings.

The Buddha cannot appreciate the offerings made to his image; yet this does not affect the validity of the wholesome kamma of doing puja.

An ancient thupa built over the site where the Buddha's remains were cremated.

3. Devas may not be able to eat the food, but they will probably feel honoured at the offerings and reciprocate by giving protection and assistance—or else why would the Buddha praise the making of such offerings as a worthy deed, befitting wealth "that has gone to good use, that has been fruitfully employed and used for a worthy cause"?

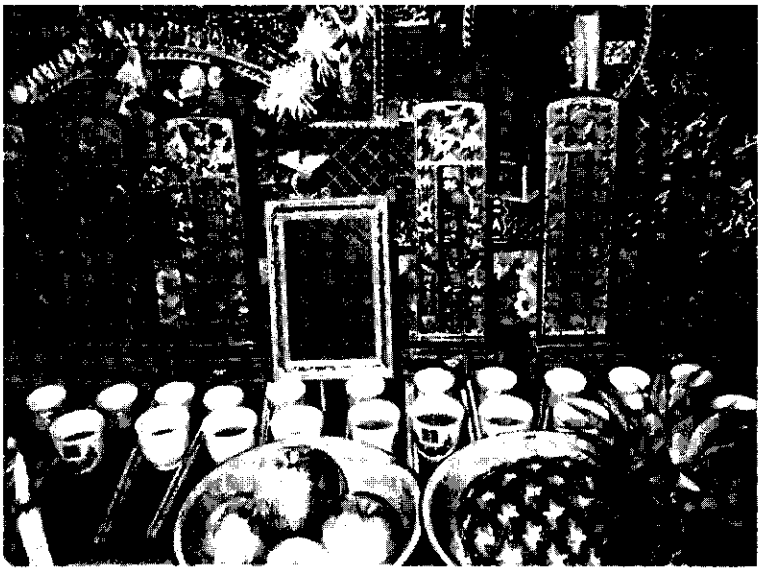
People make offerings of food, drinks, flowers, incense, etc. to the Buddha image. Can the Buddha "eat" or appreciate the offerings? Obviously not. So, what's the point of doing such puja? I think it is the mental attitude that counts. The act of honouring those who are worthy of honour is a lofty blessing (*pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*) listed in Mangala Sutta (KN: Khp 5; Sn 2:4). So are the acts of showing respect and gratitude (*gāravo ca nivāto ca, santuṭṭhi ca kataññutā… etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*). Therefore, whether or not one's offerings are appreciated by the recipient does not affect the validity of the wholesome kamma of doing puja.

Where and When to Make Offerings

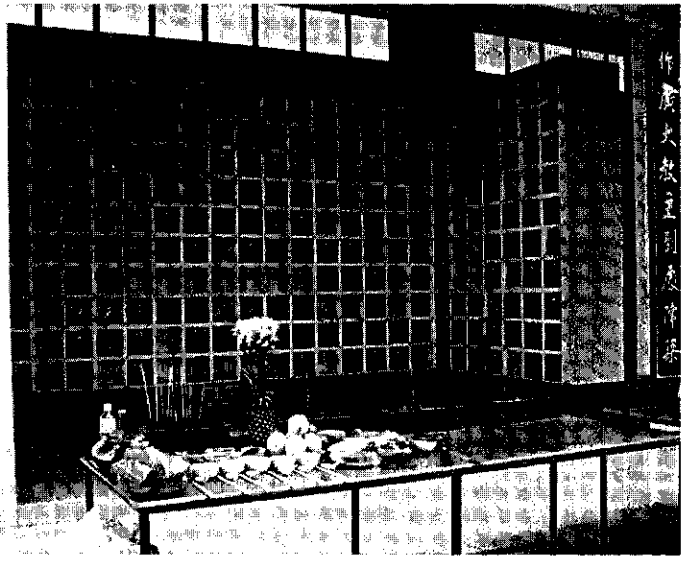
Honouring the departed by making material offerings to them was an Indian custom already in practice during the Buddha's time. However, unlike Chinese custom, burying their remains in graves marked by tombstones or enshrining their ashes after cremation was not so common for the Indians. The practice of enshrining the ashes in mounds (*thūpa*) was confined to royalty and renunciants believed to have achieved high spiritual attainments. These thupas were considered shrines (*cetiya*).

For this reason, perhaps, the Pali scriptures[5] do not specify any particular location to make offerings to departed relatives. We saw in the Vinaya Pitaka that some people, who were not

[5] Throughout this work, I have used the term "Pali scriptures" to mean the Pali Canon, its commentaries and sub-commentaries.



Offerings made at ancestral tablets in China.



Offerings made in a modern columbarium.

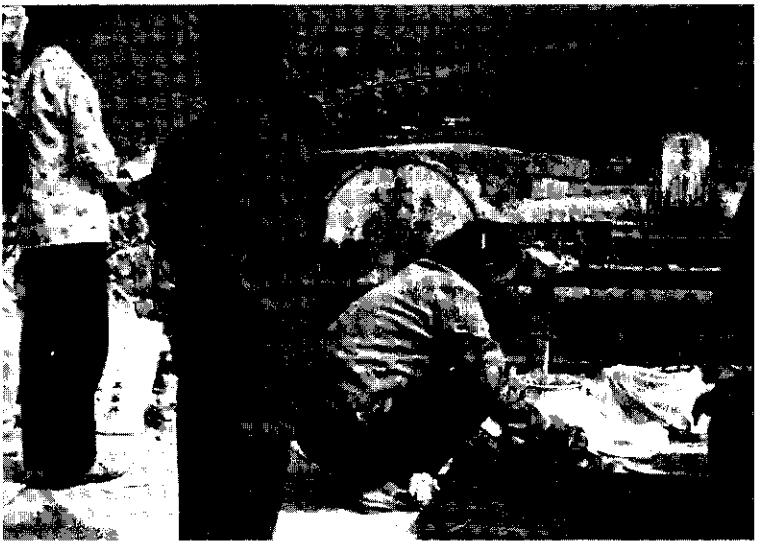
necessarily Buddhists, made offerings in the charnel ground. In Tirokutta Sutta, it appears that the departed ones returned to their former houses and so, the offerings could have been made there. However, the location for making offerings to departed relatives is not mentioned at all in Sigalovada Sutta, Pattakamma Sutta, or Adiya Sutta. The Buddha said in Mahaparinibbana Sutta that, among other things, if the Vajjians continued to honour their shrines inside and outside their city, they would prosper and not decline.

These references seem to suggest that the location is not particularly important. One can make offerings to departed relatives at any place that is convenient, and in keeping with one's family custom and modern circumstances.

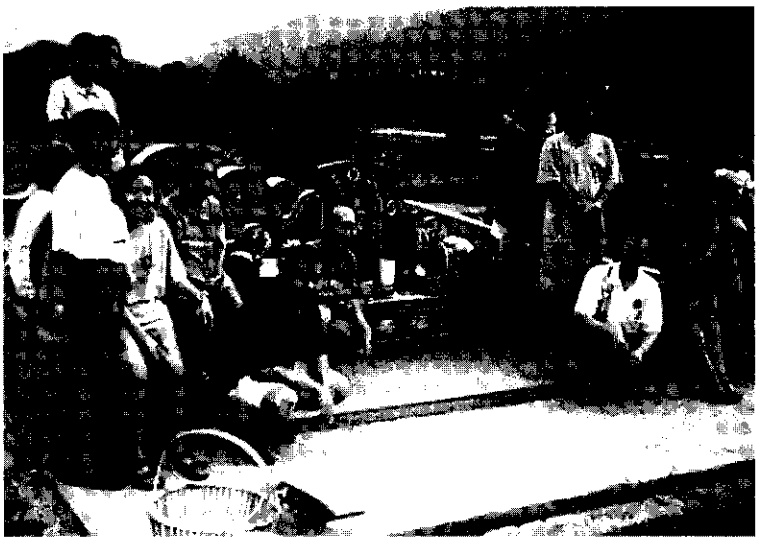
In the old days, the Chinese used to make offerings to their departed relatives at home where the ancestral tablets were kept, or in cemeteries where the graves of the deceased were located. Nowadays, modern people are not so willing to keep ancestral tablets in their homes. Such an attitude, coupled with scarcity of land for cemeteries and the spiralling costs of burial services, has brought about the modern Chinese phenomenon called the columbarium, which has acquired a new meaning different from the original, that is "a shelter for birds (especially pigeons)".

A Chinese columbarium refers to a building with niches, like pigeonholes, where filial Chinese deposit urns containing the ashes of their departed ones. Here, bereavement or commemorative services are conducted for the deceased by the surviving relatives at periodic intervals after the funeral and during important festivals of the Chinese lunar year. This is a modern version of the ancient Chinese custom of honouring the departed.

One of the important festivals of the Chinese lunar year is Qing Ming. Besides being an expression of filial piety towards



Making offerings periodically to departed relatives is listed in Sigalovada Sutta as one of the duties of offspring to parents.



Qing Ming is also an opportunity for family reunions.

the departed, Qing Ming is also an opportunity for family reunions. Although the Chinese customarily have a reunion during the Chinese New Year, this often does not materialise after the parents have passed away. Qing Ming then becomes a back-up annual reunion for family members returning to make offerings to their late parents and other departed relatives.

Remember that one of the duties of a child listed in Sigalovada Sutta is "to **continually** make offerings to the departed ones (*petānaṃ kālaṅkatānaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ anuppadassāmi*)". Making offerings periodically is part of a continual process in line with the above sutta. The Buddha also said in Mahaparinibbana Sutta that regular gatherings, respect for elders and upholding the custom of making offerings at community shrines would foster prosperity for the community.

SHARING OF MERITS

We should take note that the actual procedure of "transferring" or "sharing" merits is not mentioned in all the suttas I have referred to so far, nor in any other sutta in the Pali Canon that I am currently aware of. "Should dedicate the offering" (*dakkhiṇamādise*) seems to be the nearest hint found in the Pataligama story (DN 16) and elsewhere. For example, in Milinda Pañha (KN), King Milinda asked Ven Nagasena, "...these donors give dana and dedicate it to departed ones, thinking, 'May this reach them...' (*ime dāyakā dānaṃ datvā pubbapetānaṃ ādisanti 'idaṃ tesaṃ pāpuṇātū'ti...*)"

I shall be most grateful if anyone could point out references from the suttas that give more details on this subject.*

Some people draw a distinction between "transference" and "sharing" of merits, saying that the former is meant for departed relatives and the latter for others, including devas and living

*Refer to Appendix for more details.

human beings. To date, I have not been able to find this distinction in the Pali scriptures. **Again, I shall be most grateful to be enlightened with conclusive references.**

Conditions for Efficacy

According to the Commentary to Tirokutta Sutta, however, a few factors decide whether the merits thus dedicated can be received by the departed relative:

- The donor must think of the deceased and dedicate the Sanghadana to the deceased.
- The dana recipient must be virtuous.
- The deceased must rejoice in the dedication of merits (e.g. by saying, "*Sādhu!* Sadhu! Sadhu!").

The commentary argues that the merits accrued to one cannot be transferred to another because the law of kamma states that beings are the owners of their own kamma. However, by rejoicing in another's meritorious deed, one is creating wholesome kamma for oneself. In the case of a departed one reborn as a deprived ghost, rejoicing in the dana dedicated to him can give immediate relief and other benefits, particularly if the dana recipient is virtuous.

A Buddhist son may choose to have a "pure Buddhist" funeral for his departed Taoist father. Now, even if the deceased was aware of the dedication of the Sanghadana, he might not be happy or rejoice because the funeral was not conducted in the Taoist tradition. So, according to the above conditions, he cannot receive the merits, can he?

On the other hand, if the funeral was conducted according to his personal preference, do you think he would be happy? If he rejoiced in his family's act of filial duty as recommended by the Buddha in Sigalovada Sutta, Pattakamma Sutta and Tirokutta Sutta, would he be creating wholesome kamma that could also give immediate benefits? Think about it.

Other Ways Not Mentioned in the Scriptures

Apart from the dedication of offerings to devas as mentioned in the suttas, and to departed ones as explained in the commentaries, there may also be other ways of sharing merits, as the experiences of contemporary Buddhists imply. Here is one real-life story (condensed from *The Story of Old Man Tiow* by Sichitra Ronruen) that happened in Thailand not too long ago.

There was an old Chinaman named Tiow who was a butcher. He had a son who became a monk against his wishes. One day, Tiow was killed by robbers who tried to steal his pigs. Together with other monks, the son chanted for his father lying in the coffin. On the third night, there was some noise coming from the coffin. When it was opened, the father was found still alive.

According to the father, two body-guards from hell took him to see King Yama[6] who asked, "Have you done any good deeds?"

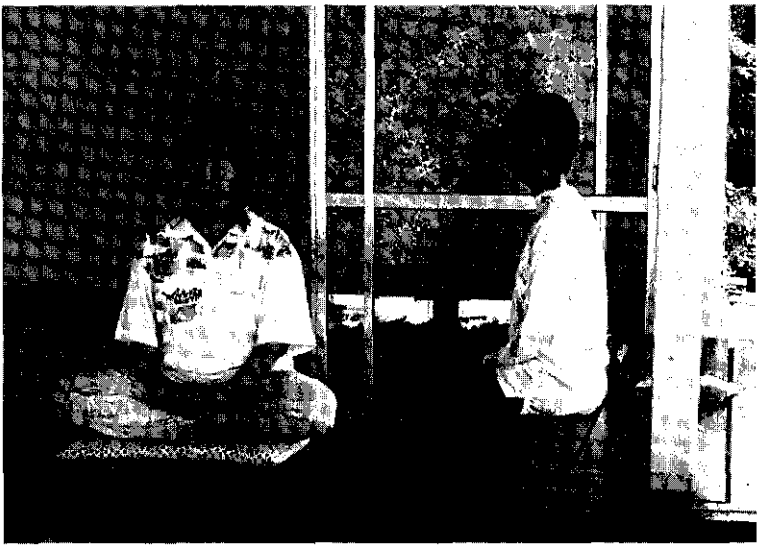
The old man replied, "No, I do not believe in meritorious deeds like dana. For instance, why should I support monks? They do not work; they only eat and sleep, living off the faithful."

"Be prepared to suffer then!" King Yama told him. The guards threw him into the fire but before he got burnt a robe came down suddenly to cover and extinguish the fire. King Yama was very surprised. "You said you did not do any good deed, but who saved you?"

"Ah, perhaps it's my son, who is a monk," old man Tiow said.

"Your son saved you; so I will give you one more chance. Go back to the human world. But you must not be a butcher anymore. Instead, you must go to the temple and be your son's *kappiya* (steward)."

[6] King Yama is mentioned in Devaduta Sutta (MN 130) where he is portrayed as a judge who cross-questions hell-beings before they are punished.



Food dana and meditation are at two ends of the merit spectrum.

The old man quickly agreed and returned to the human world to tell his uncanny story. At that time, his son was considering whether to disrobe because he had met a girl, fallen in love with her and was contemplating marriage. However, when his father begged him to stay on, he decided not to disrobe so that his father could have one more chance to live.

How did the monk save his father? He did not do any dana. All he did was meditate, then dedicate the merits to his father. And the father was not even aware of the dedication, not to mention rejoicing in it. But he was saved anyhow. This does not seem to be in line with the commentary's conditions for the efficacy of sharing merits. How can we interpret this apparent inconsistency?

According to Luang Phor Jaren (Phra Rajsuddhiñanamongkol, author of *The Law of Kamma*), after meditation one's mind is very clear and powerful. Hence, contrary to the commentary's argument, people and other unseen beings apparently **can** receive merits that are dedicated to them after meditation, **although they may not even be aware of the sharing.**

Dana and meditation (*bhāvanā*) are at the two ends of the merit spectrum, which can be broadly categorised under dana, *sīla* and bhavana. In Velama Sutta (AN 9:20), the Buddha graded the worth of the following meritorious acts in ascending order:

- Food dana (to worldling < noble disciple < Paccekabuddha < Sammasambuddha < Sammasambuddha + Bhikkhu-sangha)
- Donating a monastery (*vihāradāna*) to the Sangha from the four directions
- Taking refuge in the Triple Gem

Meritorious deeds that can be "shared" with the departed include:

blood donation

voluntary service

caring for the aged

reciting the scriptures

teaching the Dhamma

freeing captive animals

- Observing the Five Precepts
- Metta meditation for the length of time needed to pull an udder
- Vipassana meditation that perceives impermanence of phenomena for the length of time needed to snap one's fingers.

Applying the mechanism of dedication of merits mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, one should also be able to effectively share any type of merit within this spectrum with devas or departed relatives. Rejoicing at others' meritorious deeds (*pattānumodanā*) is considered a meritorious deed in itself by the commentaries. Obviously, one's object of rejoicing is not limited to dana alone. Furthermore, the experience of old man Tiow suggests that it may not even be necessary for the recipient to be aware of the dedication (at least of a good deed at the high-end of the merit spectrum) in order to benefit from it.

Perhaps for these reasons, modern Buddhists share merits not only after food dana, but also after doing other good deeds. These include, apart from what has already been mentioned above:

- Blood donation
- Printing Dhamma books for free distribution
- Donations to charitable organisations
- Voluntary service
- Puja to the Triple Gem by offering flowers, incense, light, water, etc.
- Reciting Dhamma from the scriptures
- Teaching Dhamma
- Listening to Dhamma
- Dhamma discussion.
- Freeing captive animals.

The Buddha encouraged his followers to continually make offerings of food and drinks to departed relatives as well as to devas.

Through offerings and the dedication of merits, the devas will reciprocate with protection and assistance.

SUMMARY

We have scrutinised several suttas to investigate whether the ancient Chinese custom of making food offerings to honour (*pūjā*) departed relatives periodically, e.g. during the Qing Ming season, is in accordance with the Buddha's teaching as found in the Pali scriptures. We have also given a few sample accounts of the experiences of contemporary Buddhists. Our findings are summarised below:

1. A Buddhist is actually encouraged by the Buddha to continually make offerings of food and drinks to departed relatives as well as to devas.
2. Whether or not one's offerings are appreciated by the recipient does not affect the validity of the wholesome kamma of doing puja, which is praised by the Buddha as a lofty blessing.
3. Where and when to make offerings of food and drinks to departed relatives may not be particularly important. Besides the home, one can also make offerings at any place that is convenient, and in keeping with one's family custom and modern circumstances.
4. Dedicating the merits of Sanghadana to our departed relatives seems to be a practice described in later Pali scriptures (certain texts in the fifth Nikaya and post canonical literature).
5. According to contemporary Buddhist accounts, sharing merits after doing Sanghadana may not be the *only* effective way of sharing merits. One can also share merits effectively after meditation or other meritorious deeds.
6. Dedicating one's merits to devas is also a practice encouraged by the Buddha.
7. Through offerings and the dedication of merits, the devas are honoured and cherished and they will reciprocate by giving protection and assistance.

CONCLUSION

It is mentioned in Sigalovada Sutta that continually making offerings to departed relatives is one of the responsibilities of children towards their parents. Tirokutta Sutta states that it is the duty of sympathetic people to offer food and drinks to their departed relatives and friends. In Pattakamma Sutta, the Buddha praised the making of offerings to departed relatives as a worthy deed, befitting wealth "that has gone to good use, that has been fruitfully employed and used for a worthy cause". Honouring those who are worthy of honour, showing respect and expressing gratitude are lofty blessings listed in Mangala Sutta. In Mahaparinibbana Sutta, the Buddha said that regular gatherings, respect for elders and upholding the custom of making offerings at community shrines would foster prosperity for the community.

So, periodical food offerings to honour departed relatives, e.g. during the Qing Ming season, is still a good old Chinese custom that is in accordance with the Buddha's teaching. This customary practice should be complemented by including worthy deeds from the spectrum of merits so that they could be shared with or transferred to the departed relatives. In this way, one would be practising a more "holistic" and "Buddhistic" way of remembering and honouring the departed.

Procedures to Honour the Departed

Having established the principles of honouring the departed according to Theravada Buddhist scriptures and real-life experiences, I shall now suggest some ways how we can honour the departed. Please bear in mind that what follows are merely suggestions and improvements based on prevalent practices here in Malaysia. Readers are free to modify the procedures according to their own preferences or the wishes of the departed, and to the social or cultural environment.

SHOWING RESPECT

Even after a physician has certified the death, feel the area around the heart to ensure that there is no more warmth before moving, cleansing or dressing the corpse. This is because consciousness may still be in the body after clinical death is apparent. Moving the body when the consciousness is still in it may adversely affect the dying person's state of mind, so crucial in determining his destiny. Absence of warmth around the heart region is an indication that consciousness is no longer in the body.[7]

Soothing Buddhist chants or hymns could be played while the corpse is being placed in the coffin, and until the funeral.

[7] This can be inferred from the dialogue in Mahavedalla Sutta (MN 43), where Ven Sariputta answers Ven Mahakotthita's questions on how to determine when death occurs and how to tell the difference between a dead body and that of a yogi who is in the state of *saññavedayita-nirodha* (cessation of perception and feeling).

The burning of paper money, clothes, houses, etc. as offerings to the departed is **not** part of Theravada Buddhist practice.

Food should preferably be vegetarian, but if meat is to be offered, one should not obtain it by causing death to any living being.

Traditionally, the Chinese lay offerings of food, drinks and joss sticks in front of the coffin as a form of honouring the departed.

After the funeral, one can also show respect by maintaining cleanliness of the ancestral tablet, grave or niche in a columbarium, and doing the other things mentioned below on a regular basis. How regular one wants to be is a personal choice.

MAKING MATERIAL OFFERINGS

Material offerings include food, drinks, flowers, incense and light. These should be carefully prepared and arranged neatly. Food should preferably be vegetarian, but if meat is to be offered, one should not obtain it by causing death to any living being. For example, one should not make an order for a pig to be slaughtered and roasted for the occasion.

The rationale behind the burning of paper money, clothes, houses, vehicles, chauffeurs, mobile phones, smart cards, TVs, VCD players, etc. as offerings to the departed is alien to the Pali scriptures, and so such a custom is not a part of Theravada Buddhist practice.

INVITING THE DEPARTED

After the material offerings have been prepared, the departed should be invited to come to receive the offerings. The following is a sample invitation:

> **The late so-and-so, if you are aware that we are making these offerings to you, we would like to invite you to come and receive them.**

In making such a formal invitation, it is hoped that the departed can be aware of the relatives' offerings, and the guardian devas there will allow him/her to come to receive and enjoy the offerings. (*See also story under the next heading.*)

Traditionally, the Chinese practise a ritual of tossing two coins to determine whether the departed ones have finished their "meal".

The most common form of sharing merits with the departed is to do so after dana to monks, recitation of scriptural passages, and perhaps a Dhamma talk.

Traditionally, the Chinese practise a ritual of tossing two coins to determine whether the departed ones have finished their "meal" so that the offerings can be cleared. This procedure may not be necessary if the food offerings are not cleared away but left in place, e.g. sometimes at the graves in a cemetery. On the other hand, it is particularly relevant if it is done at home when the food is removed for family consumption after being offered. However, even at the graves, this could be relevant when the food is cleared away to be taken home when the family leaves the cemetery.

SHARING MERITS

There are various ways of performing meritorious deeds, as mentioned above. To recapitulate, they are listed below.

- Offering food and other requisites to monks
- Donating a dwelling place to the Sangha from the four directions
- Donations to charitable organisations
- Blood or organ donation
- Freeing captive animals
- Voluntary service
- Taking refuge in the Triple Gem
- Puja to the Triple Gem by offering flowers, incense, light, water, etc.
- Honouring those worthy of honour, e.g. parents, teachers, the virtuous, the spiritually attained
- Observing the Five or Eight Precepts
- Sponsoring Dhamma books
- Listening to Dhamma
- Reciting Dhamma from the scriptures
- Dhamma discussion
- Teaching Dhamma
- Practising meditation, particularly metta and vipassana.

Of these, the most common one is to invite the Sangha to the house of the departed to receive alms food and other requisites, as well as to recite selected passages from the Pali scriptures. For most practising Buddhists, this constitutes the most significant part of pre-funeral rites. Sharing of the merits thus accrued is done at the end of such a bereavement service.

Less orthodox Theravadins may also repeat this rite at the end of each week, until the seventh week after the death. This is not a Theravadin tradition but is a custom practised by the Chinese probably based on the Vajrayana belief that the spirit of the departed can still be in an intermediate state closely linked to its former existence. As long as its kamma is not yet conducive to its next rebirth, it will have to undergo a similar 'small' death at the end of each week. If rebirth has not taken place by the end of 49 days, there will not be any more weekly 'small' deaths, and the being is considered trapped in the ghost realm.

While this belief cannot be substantiated in the Pali scriptures, the practice of having such weekly bereavement services followed by the sharing of merits does not in any way contradict Theravada teachings of honouring the departed on a regular basis.

Whenever possible, make a formal invitation to the departed before the commencement of a meritorious deed dedicated to him/her, such as:

> **The late so-and-so, if you are aware that we are dedicating these merits to you, we now invite you to come and witness this act. May you benefit by appreciating and rejoicing in our dedication of merits.**

It is hoped that by making such a formal invitation, the departed can be aware of the relatives' offerings, and the guardian devas there will allow him/her to come to witness the event and participate in the sharing of merits later, as the following story shows.

Once there was a famous forest *sayadaw* [Burmese monk-teacher] whose mother, herself a nun, died and was reborn in a not-so-happy existence. She appeared, in a wretched condition, to her daughter in a dream and asked for offerings to be made to her. The family had actually made offerings in a monastery, but because they did not invite her, she could not go in (due to the intervention of the guardian devas of the monastery). The sayadaw advised the family to invite her into the monastery first and then offer robes and other requisites to the Sangha. In this way the monastery devas would be aware of her and allow her in. After that, the departed one never appeared to the family again.

After the meritorious deed has been performed, the sharing of merits can be done by making a verbal announcement as follows:

Today we have done the following meritorious deeds: [list them out, e.g.] **taken refuge in the Triple Gem, observed the Five Precepts, given dana to the Sangha, listened to the Dhamma, and** [so on]. **We now offer a share of these merits especially to the late so-and-so.**

As sharing of merits is considered a meritorious deed by itself, Buddhists share merits not only with the specific departed one, but also with others as well. These include one's living benefactors, close ones, friends, colleagues, other departed relatives, guardian devas and all other beings. So the verbal announcement can also include the following:

We also offer a share of these merits to our parents, teachers, family, friends, colleagues, other departed relatives, our guardian devas, guardian devas of the Sasana, guardian devas of this house, guardian devas of this locality, guardian devas of the world, other devas, spirits and all other beings.

ASPIRATION

In concluding the verbal sharing of merits, a Buddhist should also make aspirations for the happiness and well-being of others,

especially the particular departed one, and for one's own ultimate liberation from all suffering.

May the late so-and-so appreciate and rejoice in this sharing of merits and therefore be happy, well and peaceful. May all beings appreciate and rejoice in this sharing of merits and therefore be happy, well and peaceful. May these merits conduce to the attainment of Nibbana—the ultimate happiness, the greatest peace.

Sutta References on Dedication of Merits

In response to my appeal for more information from the suttas on the procedure of sharing merits, Ven Varadhammo of Penang has kindly provided two references: Culasaccaka Sutta (MN 35) and Nandamata Sutta (AN 7:53). However these references only show the procedure of dedicating merits to living human beings and to devas.

DEDICATING MERITS TO LIVING HUMANS

Culasaccaka Sutta describes how Saccaka of the Aggivessana clan, a renowned debater and disciple of Nigantha the founder of Jainism, was defeated by the Buddha in a public debate he himself had initiated. Despite his defeat, he was sporting enough to invite the Buddha and the bhikkhusangha for a meal the next day. He also invited the people who had listened to the debate to "bring to me whatever you think would be suitable for him."

At the end of the dana, he said to the Buddha, "Master Gotama, may the merits and the great meritorious fruits of this dana be for the happiness of the givers. (*Yamidaṁ, bho gotama, dāne puññañca puññamahī ca taṁ dāyakānaṁ sukhāya hotu.*)"

The Buddha answered, "Aggivessana, whatever comes about from giving to a recipient such as yourself—one who is not free from lust, hate and delusion—that will be for the givers. And whatever comes about from giving to a recipient such as me—one who is free from lust, hate and delusion—that will be for you."

At a glance, Saccaka's dedication of the merits from the dana to the givers appears to be a simple wish reflecting his faith in

the law of kamma. And the Buddha's answer is just an elaboration on the law of kamma, distinguishing a hierarchy of meritorious returns from dana according to the purity of the recipient. This straightforward conclusion is based on the interpretation that "the givers" Saccaka referred to comprised the people who listened to the debate and later brought offerings to him for the dana, **as well as** Saccaka himself. In other words, **they gave to him** and **he gave to the Buddha** his own offerings as well as what they had given him.

The commentary, however, explains that "the givers" Saccaka referred to were **those who gave to him** so that he could give to the Buddha. As Saccaka was the one who actually gave to the Buddha, can we then consider that Saccaka had dedicated to the givers the merits accrued from his act of offering to the Buddha i.e. as a form of sharing merits with fellow humans? If it is, then the Buddha did not seem to endorse it. From this perspective, the Buddha's cryptic answer could be interpreted to mean that one can only benefit from the merits of the dana that one has personally given to the recipient of one's original intent—thus showing that the merits of doing dana, which are at the lowest end of the merit spectrum, cannot be shared with fellow humans. Was this actually what the Buddha meant to say?

I think the Buddha's main intent was not to disapprove of sharing merits with the living, but rather to humble the contentious Saccaka by pointing out his inferior spiritual status and implying a hierarchy of meritorious returns for dana according to the purity of the recipient, about which he elaborated elsewhere, e.g. Velama Sutta (AN 3:193) and Dakkhinavibhanga Sutta (MN 142).

As I pointed out on pg 28, one of the conditions for sharing of merits (*pattidāna*) to be effective is, rejoicing in the merits that have been done (*pattānumodanā*). However, rejoicing in others'

meritorious deeds seems to have a different mechanism—it is merits that can be obtained irrespective of whether or not others share their merits. This can be inferred from the following verses, in which the sharing of merits is not mentioned at all:

> *At the right time give the wise,*
> those discreet and free from stinginess.
> That which is given to the noble ones
> who are upright and equanimous (*tādisu*)—
> done with clarity of mind (*vippasannamanā*),
> abundant is that offering (*vipulā hoti dakkhiṇā*).
> (For) **those who rejoice then** (*ye tattha anumodanti*)
> or do volunteer service (*veyyāvaccaṁ karonti vā*);
> *their offering is not less (na tesaṁ dakkhiṇā ūnā)*—
> for they too **have a share of the merit** (*tepi puññassa bhāgino*) ...
>
> KALADANA SUTTA (AN 5:36)

DEDICATING MERITS TO A DEVA

Nandamata Sutta relates an account of a female lay disciple, Nanda's mother, who rose before dawn one night and sang some Dhamma verses called "The Way to Beyond (*Parāyana*)". At that time a deva, the Great King Vessavana, was passing by and stopped to listen till the end. Then he said, "Sadhu, sister, sadhu!" When she found out who he was, she said, "Let this Dhamma-metaphor (*dhammapariyāyo*) sung by me be a visitor's gift (*ātitheyyaṁ*) for you."

"Sadhu, sister," he replied. "Let that be a visitor's gift for me. Tomorrow the bhikkhusangha headed by Sariputta and Moggallana will come, not having had their breakfast. After having fed them, please dedicate the offering to me (*mama dakkhiṇaṁ ādiseyyāsi*). And that too shall be a visitor's gift for me. (*Etañceva me bhavissati ātitheyyaṁ.*)"

Nanda's mother did as she was told. When Ven Sariputta finished eating, she recounted what had happened the previous

night and said, "Bhante, may the merits and the great meritorious fruits of this dana be for the happiness of the Great King Vessavana. (*Yadidaṁ, bhante, dāne puññañca puññamahī ca taṁ vessavaṇassa mahārājassa sukhāya hotu.*)"

SUMMARY

From these references we can make the following conclusions:

1. The canonical procedure of dedicating merits is actually very simple:
   - Perform dana
   - At the end of the dana, dedicate the merits by saying: "May the merits and the great meritorious fruits of this dana be for the happiness of so-and-so."
2. One can still gain merit by rejoicing in others' meritorious deeds regardless of whether the meritorious deeds had been dedicated to one.

Glossary of Non-English Terms

Italicised words in the explanations below, e.g. *Pāli*, are separately explained.

Abhidhamma	"Higher *Dhamma*", considered part of the *Pāli Canon* and grouped under Khuddaka *Nikāya* (KN), dealing mainly with ultimate realities of mind and matter
bhāvanā	meditation, mental cultivation or development
bhikkhu	Buddhist monk who has received the higher ordination according to the *Theravāda* tradition
bhikkhusaṅgha	order of *bhikkhus*
brahmin	one belonging to the priestly caste of India
dāna	act of giving, offering
deva	deity
Dhamma	Buddha's Teachings
duccarita	"bad conduct", is three-fold: in body, speech and mind; comprises the 10 unwholesome courses of action
kamma	volitional action
kappa	aeon, 'world period', inconceivable long period of time
kappiya	(in full: kappiyakāraka) steward for monks

mettā	loving-kindness
Nikāya	Collection of the Buddha's discourses, which are preserved in *Pāli* and grouped into 5 Nikāyas: Dīgha Nikāya (DN), Majjhima Nikāya (MN), Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN), Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN), and Khuddaka Nikāya (KN)
Paccekabuddha	Privately Enlightened One who, like a *Sammāsambuddha*, has gained Awakening without the benefit of a teacher, but who is unable to teach others the practice that leads to Awakening. On attaining the goal, a Paccekabuddha lives a solitary life.
Pāli	ancient language of Indian origin in which Gotama Buddha's teachings are preserved
Pāli Canon	the 5 *Nikāyas*
Pāli scriptures	the *Pāli Canon*, its commentaries and sub-commentaries
pūjā	honour; respect; devotional offering
qi	essence, energy
Qing Ming	[Lit. pure brightness or clear-bright] A Chinese festival now most commonly associated with honouring ancestors and the departed. It usually occurs on the 5th of April in the Gregorian calendar.
sādhu	well done, excellent
Sammāsambuddha	Perfectly Self-enlightened One, e.g. Gotama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism
saṃsāra	round of births and deaths
Saṅgha	Order of *bhikkhus*
Saṅghadāna	giving food, robes, etc. to the *Saṅgha*
sīla	moral virtue

Sāsana	(the Buddha's) Teachings/Dispensation
sucarita	"good conduct", is three-fold: in body, speech and mind; comprises the 10 wholesome courses of action
sutta	discourse or sermon by the Buddha or his contemporary disciples. After the Buddha's death the suttas were passed down according to a well-established oral tradition, and were finally committed to writing in the *Pāli* language in Sri Lanka around 100 BCE. The *Pāli* suttas are widely regarded as the earliest record of the Buddha's teachings.
thera	elder—*bhikkhu* of at least ten years' standing
Theravāda	Doctrine of the Elders—one of the two main traditions of Buddhism, the other being Mahāyāna. It claims to be the earliest, most authentic extant record of Gotama Buddha's teachings and stresses on striving for one's own liberation as the priority in spiritual practice.
Theravādin	advocate or follower of *Theravāda*
Vajjians	people in the province of Vajji during the Buddha's time
Vajrayāna	"Diamond Vehicle"—a Buddhist tradition peculiar to the Tibetans, considered a subset of *Mahāyāna*
Vinaya Piṭaka	"Discipline Basket"—a compilation of monastic rules and regulations that is part of the *Pāli Canon* and grouped under Khuddaka *Nikāya* (KN)
vipassanā	insight meditation
yogi	one who practises meditation

Venerable Aggacitta Bhikkhu is a Malaysian Theravada Buddhist monk who received *upasamapadā* (higher ordination) at Mahasi Meditation Centre, Rangoon, Burma, in 1979. He has trained under various teachers, notably Sayadaw U Pandita (Panditarama), Sayadaw U Tissara (Yankin Forest Monastery), and Sayadaw U Acinna (Pa Auk Forest Monastery).

Besides practicing meditation, he studied advanced Pali and translation in Thai and Burmese under Sayadaw U Dhammananda at Wat Tamaoh, Lampang, Thailand, from 1983 to 1984. He continued to study the Pali Tipitaka and researched on its interpretation and practice in Myanmar until his return to Malaysia at the end of 1994.

In 2000, he founded Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS), a Theravada monk training center nestled among secluded valleys and brooks near Taiping, Perak, Malaysia.

Languages that he is knowledgeable in are English, Bahasa Malaysia, Hokkien, Myanmar, Thai and Pali. Among his major literary contributions are:

- Discourse on Atanatiya Protection (translated, 2003)
- Role of Sangha in the New Millenium: The Monastic Perspective (authored, 2002)
- Kathina Then and Now (authored, 2001)
- Dying to Live: The Role of Kamma in Dying and Rebirth (authored, 1999)
- In This Very Life (translated, 1993)
- Dhamma Therapy (translated, 1984)
- The Importance of Keeping the Five Precepts (authored, 1982)

Sabbadānaṁ dhammadānaṁ jināti
Thegift of the Dhamma surpasses all gifts.
- BUDDHA -

We offer a share of the merits accrued in the writing, editing and sponsorship of this gift of the Dhamma to all our deceased relatives from time immemorial and to all other beings. May they appreciate and rejoice in this dana and be happy, well and peaceful!
Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

3000 copies sponsored by Volunteers of
Ehipassiko Chanting Group (ECG) and Firefly Mission (FFM)
with Special Dedication to the Memory of

Chee Kum Kok, Cheong Yit Lin, Chua Tiong Cheng, Hanson Wong Ho Yen, Hoi Sai Cheong, Lau Lian Choo, Lee Siew Choy, Leong Soo Chai, Lim Koon Seng, Lim Seng Buck, Neo Koon Wei, Ng Ah Ho, Ng Tian Lim, Ooi Hoe Peng, Quek Chuwi Chu, R T T Hust Donluam, Soh Chwee Lian, Tan Ah Ang, Yeo Ah Bee, Tan Ah Lai, Toh Bee Lan, Voon Tiong Watt, Wong Swee York

3000 copies sponsored by devotees of
Kajang Nian Jue Lin Buddhist Meditation Association
18, Batu 11, Cheras Kampung Baru
43200 Selangor Darul Ehsan (tel: 03-9076 2736)

1000 copies Soon Family In Memory of Ah Hong

300 copies Soo Len Jin

400 copies each Soon Kok Thiam & Family, Tee Yoke Poh

100 copies by each family
Neo Bok Eng, Chua Chew Ngoh, Neo Woon Tien, Neo Wen Xin, Neo Dun Xian • Koh Kook Leong, Teoh Poh Hing, Koh Beng Chong, Koh Beng Chuan, Koh Chen Hong, Koh Chen Yang • Teoh Hock Kuan, Ang Ying Ying, Teoh Wing Wai, Teoh Wing Hoi • Teoh Tuan Harng, Wong Gek Lan @ Noi • Tan Bak Teck, Cheah Siew King, Heah Ah Bar, Goh Yoon Fong, Heah Pei Pei, Neo Bok Chuan, Chen Sze Hui, Neo Xin Yi • Ang Boon Hock, Neo Seow Khoon, Ang Koon Beng, Ang Pei Qin, Ang Kai Xin, Ang Kai Beng • Foo Meng Fong, Tan Cho Moi, Foo Kiat Kun, Foo Kiat Seng, Foo Kiat Weng, Foo Choy Feng • Teoh Geok Huay @ Tea Hak Ee, Yap Jei Shin • Bay Peng Hock • Wong Pen Chian • Bay Teong Sitt • Bay Chooi Fong • Bay Chooi Ying • Bay Chooi Khim • Soon Kim Hong • Soon Kim Zhang • Soon Kok Kian & Family • Adrian Soon Kok Tiong &Family • Soon Kim Yau • Lee Ah Hwai & Family • Soon Kim Lin • Soon Wen Shuang • Ng Kim Kiew

50 copies by each family
Chen Sing Hin, Lee Saw Lian, Che Sze Mien, Yee Pei Leng • Lee Tian Siang, Chio Geok Sim, Lee Ming Wee, Lee Ming Loon, Lee Ming Han, Lee Ming Yen • Yong Kim Kwang • Lim Mooi Choo • Yong Hon Choong & Family • Tiew Kok Chai & Family • Lim Lea Mooi • Tiew Kai Jie • Tiew Kai Liang • Yong Kim Yam

RM205.00 Neo Bok Kuan, Tan Kim Lan, Neo Chiao Joo, Neo Chien Loo & Neo Chin Yong

RM200.00 Kong Kok Fai, Hoh Kiam Poan & Kong Kwok Wai

RM20.00 Pua Chihg Jwu & Tan Kian Hoo